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ABSTRACT

Information on how to make an application for a Fulbright Award is presented to assist faculty members, young scholars, and women and minority group members who are often underrepresented in these scholarly opportunities. Ways to help applicants improve their chances of selection in a competitive process are identified. Every year, there are about 1,000 Fulbright awards for research and teaching in over 100 countries; most applications are not successful (e.g., in the 1983-84 program year there were 3,045 applications and 774 grants). Research awards are more competitive than are lecturing awards. In general, the competition is keenest for awards in popular areas such as Western Europe, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand. Some factors which influence the attractiveness of an award are: need for a foreign language; perceived attractiveness of living in a particular place; resources for productive research; personal safety; respect for human and civil rights; and cultural familiarity. In many less developed countries, there are often unfilled awards. Those applicants who can lecture in a foreign language have an advantage over other applicants. Applications for research awards require a strong emphasis on the research plan, its design, and its feasibility. The importance of a strong resume and strong references is stressed. It is suggested that rejected applicants reapply. Contains 5 references. (SM)

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ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND LECTURING PROPOSALS THAT MEET FULBRIGHT QUALITY STANDARDS

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ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND LECTURING PROPOSALS

THAT MEET FULBRIGHT QUALITY STANDARDS

In 1986, the 40 year anniversary of the Fulbright scholar program was observed. From its establishment the Fulbright Scholar Program has sent 20,000 scholars around the world to teach, lecture, and conduct research. Every year now there are about 1,000 Fulbright awards for research and teaching in over 100 countries.

As in any other procedure, making a research proposal and application is a difficult process to those who are unfamiliar with it. As in other situations, preparing a complete, accurate and fully descriptive proposal can improve the chances of being granted an award. Conducting research on the granting agency and proposal process is important to preparing a quality proposal.

Applications undergo a two step process of peer review by the advisory committees of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the private organization which participates in the administration of the Fulbright Scholar Program. The first peer review is done by subject matter specialists, the so-called "discipline committees." The second peer review is done by an interdisciplinary team of geographic area specialists. After scholars are nominated by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), applications are sent for review to the Board of Foreign Scholarships, and the Fulbright bi-national commissions or US Embassies abroad. Prospective host institutions abroad may also review applications for suitability.

Applications are evaluated for Fulbright awards in the context of

the total number of applications submitted for a given award, or for the entire program of a given country. There is research reported on the application-to-grant ratios by disciplines, by countries applied for, and by special regional programs, e.g., American Republics Research Program. (Council for International Exchange of Scholar [CIES], 1986)

Knowledge about the grant ratios, the purposes of the Program, and the selection criteria, including the peer review process, can help an interested scholar prepare a high quality proposal and improve chances of being selected and serving well the objectives of the Program.

Selection criteria will be analyzed, in the paper but, in summary, they include professional qualifications, the significance of the proposed project and its feasibility. The proposal's evidence of some prepared collaborative arrangement with the host institution or scholars overseas is important. Competency in a foreign langauge, evidence that residence in the proposed country is appropriate to the project, and plans to disseminate research findings abroad as well as in the United States, are all important criteria.

The paper focuses on the selection of high quality research and lecturing proposals, and uses the experience of a number of scholars, including former Fulbright Award Recipients, staff of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, and former members of peer review panels. It is expected that the paper will be especially helpful to the young or inexperienced scholars, as well as to women and minority group members, who are often underrepresented in these scholarly opportunities.

Table 1.
Programs for American Scholars, 1983-84 Program Year

	Applications			Nominations			Renominations	Scholars Not Receiving Award		
	LECT	RES	TOTAL	LECT	RES	TOTAL	FOR ANOTHER CITY	DECLINED	WITHDREW	OTHER
AFRICA	174	57	231	96	27	123	2	7	9	154
AMER. REPS	208	57	265	146	28	174		8	7	154
E ASIA/ PACIFIC	313	175	488	135	73	208		3	8	360
EAST EUROPE	201	50	251	136	39	175		2	16	158
NE/SA	238	283	521	105	59	164		8	11	394
WEST EUROPE	658	631	1289	256	191	447	1	11	4	957
WORLDWIDE	1792	1253	3045	874	417	1291	3	39	55	2177

	GRANTS						RENEWALS	TOTAL AWARDS
	BY ACTIVITY		BY BENEFIT			TOTAL		
	LECT	RES	FULL	PARTIAL	TRAVEL	GRANTS		NEW & RENEWALS
AFRICA	50	7	41	16		57	13	70
AMER. REPS	79	20	98		1	99		99
E ASIA/ PACIFIC	83	34	111	1	5	117	8	125
EAST EUROPE	50	24	67	4	3	74	23	97
NE/SA	74	36	105		5	110	7	117
WEST EUROPE	190	127	265	26	26	317	5	322
WORLDWIDE	526	248	687	47	40	774	56	830

NOTE: From Annual Report, 1983, Council for International Exchange of Scholars, 1984, Washington, DC: CIES

Grant Ratios

Most Fulbright applications are not successful. The total pool of awards in recent years has been in the hundreds while applications have been numbered in the thousands. For example, according to Table 1, in the 1983-84 Program year there were 3,045 applications and 774 grants. Research awards are more competitive then are lecturing awards. In 1983-84, again, 29.3% of the applicants for lecturing awards received grants, while the corresponding figure for research awards was 19.8% (CIES, 1984).

In 1986-87 Program year there were 3,382 applicants and 994 grants, and again in 1986-87 the research awards were more competitive (CIES, 1987c).

This is the gross level of grant ratios. A further question might be concerned with why this is so. The total number of awards is, of course, controlled by the amount of money available to finance them. The more competitive nature of research awards may have several explanations. One is that the proposals for research awards are more difficult to write, and take a well thought-out research plan (more on this later), and lecturing proposals are relatively more simple. Another possible explanation is that there are more faculty who would feel comfortable lecturing in their subject overseas then there are those who would like to do research in a foreign country.

Within the gross ratios, there are great differences among the various countries. In general the competition will be keenest for awards in traditionally popular areas such as Western Europe, Israel, Australia and New Zealand. Reasons for this are complex and will be

dealt with later, but the result is that it gives those who want to improve their odds, some ideas. At the other end of the spectrum are the countries which, for whatever reason, do not attract scholars, e.g., the less developed countries of Africa, Latin America, and the Near East.

Some of the attributes of an award that make a country especially attractive, or perhaps not attractive, are perceived attributes that may or may not be realistic. In any case the perceptions are held by applicants. Among the factors which influence the attractiveness of an award are the following.

The need for a foreign language is an important factor, as is the perceived attractiveness of living, often with children and spouse, in a particular place. Other factors include, resources for productive research, cultural familiarity, personal safety, respect for common human and civil rights, availability of adequate housing, and the opportunity to work with valued colleagues in one's field of study or discipline. In some cases, Peru may be an example, there may be research sites or research opportunities available nowhere else in the world.

In many less developed countries there are often unfilled award opportunities, that is, there are Fulbright awards advertised but no viable candidate applies. In many other of these countries, almost every qualified applicant is offered a grant. Examples may be seen in Table 2, the American Republic.

There are always exceptions to generalities. In 1986-87 for example, there were many applicants for awards in Colombia, Kenya, and

Table 2.
American Republics, 1983-84 Program Year

	Applications			Nominations			Scholars No Receiving Award		
	LECT	RES	TOTAL	LECT	RES	TOTAL	DECLINED	WITHDREW	OTHER
ARGENTIA	8	8	16	5	4	9		1	11
BRAZIL	69	10	79	53	5	58	2	3	41
CHILE	7	3	10	4	2	6			6
COLOMBIA	21	2	23	15	2	17	2	2	11
COSTA RICA	3	3	6	1	3	4			3
DOMINICAN REP		1	1						1
ECUADOR	8		8	8		8	1		2
GUATEMALA		1	1						1
JAMAICA	6	2	8	2	1	3	1		5
MEXICO	29	20	49	18	6	24			36
PERU	26	3	29	20	2	22	2	1	13
TRINIDAD	5		5	2		2			5
URUGUAY	20		20	15		15			14
VENEZUELA	6	4	10	3	2	5			5
TOTAL	208	57	265	146	28	174	8	7	154

	GRANTS					TOTAL AWARDS
	BY ACTIVITY		BY BENEFIT			
	LECT	RES	FULL	PARTIAL	TRAVEL	TOTAL GRANTS	NEW & RENEWALS
ARGENTIA	2	2	2		1	4	4
BRAZIL	31	4	35			35	35
CHILE	2	2	4			4	4
COLOMBIA	7	1	8			8	8
COSTA RICA	1	2	3			3	3
ECUADOR	4	1	5			5	5
JAMAICA	1	1	2			2	2
MEXICO	9	5	14			14	14
PERU	12	1	13			13	13
URUGUAY	7		7			7	7
VENEZUELA	3	1	4			4	4
TOTAL	79	20	98		1	99	99

NOTE: From Annual Report, 1983, Council for International Exchange of Scholars, 1984, Washington, DC: CIES.

Nigeria. The exceptions pose little threat to the generalization, however. Then there are areas in the world that are at neither extreme. Much of Eastern Europe, Asia, and the USSR, are quite attractive to scholars and there is substantial competition (CIES, 1987b, 1987c).

There also appears to be a spill-over effect on attractive countries that are near perceived trouble spots. Two examples might be Dominican Republic and Costa Rica in Latin America. Both are attractive, stable, safe, and democratic countries in which one could freely lecture or do research, to the benefit of the host institution as well as the scholars. But both countries area so close to widely publicized trouble spots that one might theorize that proximity to trouble will affect perceptions of applicants.

Related to the discussion above is the question of language facility. Most of the competitive award situations allow the applicant to teach in English, or to do research without much foreign language fluency. One must be careful, however, to avoid pushing the principle too far, for in many of the countries with few applicants, English is an acceptable medium of instruction. Thus, language is clearly related to place, but it is also an independent variable in the decision-making process of applicants.

In some cases where foreign language fluency is required, awards are highly competitive. Recent examples include Spain and Venezuela.

Selection of Applicants

As indicated above, applicantions go through a rigorous process of peer review by scholars in their field, and by area committees. Those

that pass this process are sent to the prospective host country and institutions for review. Applicants should keep in mind the groups and individuals reviewing an application, and should carefully read and digest the whole application process as described in the CIES application, available annually from CIES. That application provides a great deal of information which will not be repeated in this paper (CIES, 1987a).

The purpose of this paper is to help applicants, who have read the procedures and understand them, to improve their chances of selection. Although many of the points in this paper may seem obvious to experienced scholars, newer and younger persons may find information here to help them plan. One might add that it is always surprising how many experienced scholars display in their applications an apparent lack of knowledge about the process.

One of the most helpful things for the applicant to do is to call the program officer, whose name and number is listed by each country lectureship and research award in the Annual Faculty Grants Booklet (CIES, 1987c). Program officers are well informed and willing to share information, give advice, and send applicants material. Their role is to fill the awards with high quality applicants. Applicants who have carefully read the material and talked with program officers, are probably more likely to prepare a successful application than other applicants.

Those applicants who can lecture in a foreign language have an advantage over other applicants because the competition for awards tends to drop off, other things being equal, when such language

facility is required. Also, research done in a non-English speaking country would usually be enhanced if one spoke the langauge used locally. Language is an important factor in personal as well as professional communication, and applicants who can speak the language of the host country will better be able to foster the goals of the program, as well as improve the chances of their proposals.

Applications for research awards require a strong emphasis on the research plan, the design of the research, and its feasibility. The application will be enhanced if it shows clearly the nature of the research proposed and its importance. This may be obvious to many, but what appears to be less clear is the importance of showing a track record in the area of the research proposed. It is surprising when applicants apply for support to do research in an area where there is little or no evidence of published scholarship or previous research interest.

Related to the track record is the expectation that the applicant shows a relationship between the proposed research activity and the host country. Absent such a relationship, those who review the application may wonder why the research has to be done in the specific place requested. Similarly, reviewers will look for collaborator in the host country and host institution. Someone who not only will work, but preferably has worked, with the applicant on a defined research project. That shows a planned seriousness of purpose, a likelihood that the applicant knows the field of research, the academic environment and facilities in the host country, and has contacts at the host institution who will help reach the goals of the proposed research.

Letters from collaborators and the host institution strengthen and tend to validate the application for a research award. Applicants might consider that they are presented by paper, and only better known scholars have a reputation that proceeds or accompanies their application. Thus, the written word is so important. Committees find it hard to derive evidence on the quality of the application when such evidence is not in written form.

Applications for a lectureship would benefit from similar advice. One difference would be that the evidence for research scholarship and a research track record would be of less importance, and evidence of scholarly and effective teaching of relatively more importance. A track record of successful teaching as evidenced by teaching reports, in the discipline or subject field requested, and some evidence of previous knowledge and interest in the host country and university, including a professional relationship with colleagues there, would tend to strengthen a lectureship application. It would also be wise to include course outlines, syllabi, and bibliographies or reading lists of courses taught that are similar to courses or lectures requested by the announcement, and consistent with the background of the applicant.

Related to the above, is the fact that there are awards outside the traditional lecturing or research awards to a specific country and a specific university. Application deadlines for these awards sometimes come late in the application cycle. Some examples are: U.S.-Japan International Education Administrative Program, NATO Research Fellowships, Spain Research Fellowships, and travel-only grants to France and It[illegible].

Also, there are regional awards such as the African Regional Research Program, the Central American Republics Research Program, Islamic Civilization Research Program, and so forth. In addition, there are awards in some countries for "any field." All these awards have criteria which may fit some applicants better than the more traditional awards.

For all types of applications, it would be unwise to overlook the importance of a strong resume and strong references. These provide important evidence of quality for the reviewers. Applicants who propose to be Fulbright scholars might consider the effect on the application review of their list of scholarly publications. Is there a depth, a concentration, and focus which indicates some expertise? Are publications recent, published in quality refereed journals? Are they closely related, at least in some way, to the proposed lectureship in research? These are questions the reviewers are likely to ask; a strong application will anticipate these questions by its presentation of clear evidence.

Even high quality applications are sometimes unsuccessful. There may be many reasons, and some may be due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. With some highly competitive awards, many high quality applications have to be turned down. One might view this as a learning experience, disappointing as it may be. There are things one can do after an application has been turned down. First, find out why the application was not successful. The program officer usually has some ideas, and can help. Second, there may be alternative awards, just as professionally rewarding, but in a different country. One can

list alternative countries on the application. Even quite late, after the deadline for applications, a call to CIES may turn up unfilled awards in the applicant's discipline, and it may be possible to transfer the applicant to another geographic area for review. Third, apply again. Rejection once has little effect on re-application the next year. Seldom does anyone on a review committee know or remember anything about those who were not successful applicants. In any case, each year's pool of applicants are treated in the same way, whether they applied before or not. However, the experience may well help the applicant prepare a better application in subsequent years. There may also be professional development activities one can do to improve the record and the quality of the proposed teaching or research. There are no rules preventing one from applying again next year, and there is always room for high quality applications.

On the other hand, the problem may be that the applicant does not have a great deal to offer, and the application simply reflects a lack of scholarship. For senior awards this is, as it should be, a factor which will probably always prevent an award. For junior faculty, and for new Ph.D's, where there is some early evidence of promise, reviewers are less demanding,a nd CIES has junior lectureships and other opportunities that recognize the situation of young scholars and those who have not yet earned their doctorate.

Summary

Making an application for a Fulbright Award is a difficult process for those unfamiliar with it. The purpose of this paper is first, to make the process a bit more understandable for faculty who wish to

apply. The second purpose is to help young scholars prepare a quality proposal that will provide full information to reviewing bodies. Third, the paper attempts to help applicants identify ways to improve their chances of selection in a competitive process.

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